CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1.   A method for distributing images in a data processing system, the method comprising:

5   receiving a data stream comprising an image group identifier identifying a plurality of images; and

retrieving the images, from the data processing system, in response to receiving the image group identifier.

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2.   The method of claim 1 further comprising displaying the images, wherein the receiving, retrieving, and displaying steps are performed by a client and wherein the images are retrieved from a server.

3.   The method of claim 2 wherein:

retrieving the images further comprises retrieving the plurality of images identified by the image group identifier before displaying any of the images;

5   and

displaying the images further comprises displaying the images according to markup in the data stream.

4.   The method of claim 2 wherein:

the data stream comprises a markup element that represents an instruction to retrieve, during a single communications connection to the server, all images

5   identified by the image group identifier, and

the markup element comprises the image group identifier.

5.   The method of claim 2 wherein retrieving the images comprises aggregating the images in a data structure on the client.

6.   The method of claim 2 wherein:

the data stream comprises markup elements that represent instructions to display images at display locations, and

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the markup elements that represent instructions to display images at display locations comprise identifications of images in a data structure on the client.

7.   A method for distributing images in a data processing system, the method comprising:

           storing images on a server, including associating each image with at least one group of images identified by an image group identifier;

           receiving from a client a request for a group of images, the request comprising an image group identifier;

           retrieving from storage images identified by the image group identifier; and

           sending the retrieved images to the client.

8.   The method of claim 7 wherein:

           storing images further comprises storing images as BLOBs in a database, and

           associating each image with at least one group of images comprises storing an image identifier for each BLOB in association with an image group identifier for each file.

9.   The method of claim 7 wherein:

           storing images further comprises storing images as files on a file system, and

           associating each image with at least one group of images comprises storing a

pathname for each file in association with an image group identifier for each file.

10.   The method of claim 7 further comprising associating the groups of images with an image retrieval routine, wherein retrieving the images further comprises invoking the image retrieval routine.

11.   The method of claim 6 further comprising storing on the server documents comprising markup according to a markup language, wherein each document further comprises:

5   at least one markup element containing an image group identifier identifying a group of images, and

         markup elements that comprise identifications of individual images in a data structure on the client and represent instructions to display individual images

10   at particular display locations.

12.   A system for distributing images in a data processing system, the system
       comprising:

       means for receiving a data stream comprising an image group identifier
5   identifying a plurality of images; and

       means for retrieving the images, from the data processing system, in response
       to operation of the means for receiving the image group identifier.

13.   The system of claim 12 further comprising means for displaying the images,
       wherein the means for receiving, means for retrieving, and means for
       displaying are comprised in a client and wherein the images are retrieved from
       a server.
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14.   The system of claim 13 wherein:

       means for retrieving the images further comprises means for retrieving the
       plurality of images identified by the image group identifier before displaying
5   any of the images; and

       means for displaying the images further comprises means for displaying the
       images according to markup in the data stream.

15.   The system of claim 13 wherein:

       the data stream comprises a markup element that represents an instruction to
       retrieve, during a single communications connection to the server, all images

5   identified by the image group identifier, and

           the markup element comprises the image group identifier.

16.   The system of claim 13 wherein means for retrieving the images comprises
           means for aggregating the images in a data structure on the client.

17.   The system of claim 13 wherein:

           the data stream comprises markup elements that represent instructions to
           display images at display locations, and

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           the markup elements that represent instructions to display images at display
           locations comprise identifications of images in a data structure on the client.

18.   A system for distributing images in a data processing system, the system
        comprising:

        means for storing images on a server, including means for associating each

5   image with at least one group of images identified by an image group
        identifier;

        means for receiving from a client a request for a group of images, the request
        comprising an image group identifier;

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        means for retrieving from storage images identified by the image group
        identifier; and

        means for sending the retrieved images to the client.

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19.   The system of claim 18 wherein:

        means for storing images further comprises means for storing images as
        BLOBs in a database, and

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        means for associating each image with at least one group of images comprises
        means for storing an image identifier for each BLOB in association with an
        image group identifier for each file.

20.   The system of claim 18 wherein:

        means for storing images further comprises means for storing images as files

on a file system, and

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means for associating each image with at least one group of images comprises
means for storing a pathname for each file in association with an image group
identifier for each file.

21.   The system of claim 18 further comprising means for associating the groups
of images with an image retrieval routine, wherein means for retrieving the
images further comprises means for invoking the image retrieval routine.

22.   The system of claim 18 further comprising means for storing on the server
documents comprising markup according to a markup language, wherein each
document further comprises:

5   at least one markup element containing an image group identifier identifying a
group of images, and

       markup elements that comprise identifications of individual images in a data
       structure on the client and represent instructions to display individual images
10   at particular display locations.

23.   A computer program product for distributing images in a data processing

        system, the computer program product comprising:

        a recording medium;

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        means, recorded on the recording medium, for receiving a data stream

        comprising an image group identifier identifying a plurality of images; and

        means, recorded on the recording medium, for retrieving the images, from the

10   data processing system, in response to operation of the means for receiving

        the image group identifier.

24.   The computer program product of claim 23 further comprising means,

        recorded on the recording medium, for displaying the images, wherein the

        means for receiving, means for retrieving, and means for displaying are

        comprised in a client and wherein the images are retrieved from a server.

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25.   The computer program product of claim 24 wherein:

        means for retrieving the images further comprises means, recorded on the

        recording medium, for retrieving the plurality of images identified by the

5   image group identifier before displaying any of the images; and

        means for displaying the images further comprises means, recorded on the

        recording medium, for displaying the images according to markup in the data

        stream.

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26.   The computer program product of claim 24 wherein:

the data stream comprises a markup element that represents an instruction to retrieve, during a single communications connection to the server, all images identified by the image group identifier, and

the markup element comprises the image group identifier.

27.   The computer program product of claim 24 wherein means for retrieving the images comprises means, recorded on the recording medium, for aggregating the images in a data structure on the client.

28.   The computer program product of claim 24 wherein:

the data stream comprises markup elements that represent instructions to display images at display locations, and

the markup elements that represent instructions to display images at display locations comprise identifications of images in a data structure on the client.

29.　　A computer program product for distributing images in a data processing system, the computer program product comprising:

a recording medium;

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means, recorded on the recording medium, for storing images on a server, including means, recorded on the recording medium, for associating each image with at least one group of images identified by an image group identifier;

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means, recorded on the recording medium, for receiving from a client a request for a group of images, the request comprising an image group identifier;

15　　　　means, recorded on the recording medium, for retrieving from storage images identified by the image group identifier; and

means, recorded on the recording medium, for sending the retrieved images to the client.

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30.　　The computer program product of claim 29 wherein:

means for storing images further comprises means, recorded on the recording medium, for storing images as BLOBs in a database, and

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means for associating each image with at least one group of images comprises means, recorded on the recording medium, for storing an image identifier for

each BLOB in association with an image group identifier for each file.

31. The computer program product of claim 29 wherein:

means for storing images further comprises means, recorded on the recording medium, for storing images as files on a file system, and

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means for associating each image with at least one group of images comprises means, recorded on the recording medium, for storing a pathname for each file in association with an image group identifier for each file.

32. The computer program product of claim 29 further comprising means, recorded on the recording medium, for associating the groups of images with an image retrieval routine, wherein means for retrieving the images further comprises means, recorded on the recording medium, for invoking the image

5   retrieval routine.

33. The computer program product of claim 29 further comprising means, recorded on the recording medium, for storing on the server documents comprising markup according to a markup language, wherein each document further comprises:

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at least one markup element containing an image group identifier identifying a group of images, and

markup elements that comprise identifications of individual images in a data

10   structure on the client and represent instructions to display individual images

at particular display locations.